

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

DATA RECOVERY
AT
SITE 18 CV 279
COMPTON TENEMENT
CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

PREPARED FOR:

CRJ ASSOCIATES, INC.
6006 MARLIN LANE
CAMP SPRINGS, MARYLAND

PREPARED BY:

THE CULTURAL RESOURCE GROUP
LOUIS BERGER & ASSOCIATES, INC.
EAST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

24 AUGUST 1988

During nine days of fieldwork from 8/9/88 to 8/19/88 an area encompassing 23,200 sq. feet was uncovered, mapped, and examined on a surface which extended 160' north-south and 180' east-west. Artifacts were shipped to East Orange, New Jersey on 8/20 and are presently being accessioned as the analysis and reporting stages of the project are now in progress. When combined with the plow zone information, the documentation recovered during data recovery will allow the three research questions to be addressed. They pertain to building organization, the use of space, and subsistence practices. Material recovered from the site is contained in a total of 70 boxes (length 16.5", width 12", height 10.5") however the processing and analysis of 24 of these boxes containing soil/flootation samples and the 27 holding oyster shells should significantly reduce the size of the collection.

Larger artifact deposits revealed after the removal of plow zone were covered with polyethelene when LBA completed the first phase of work but inclement weather during the two weeks of inactivity at the site allowed major portions of the site to be covered with silt, thus masking the locations of cultural features.

It was necessary to remove this soil cover by using flat shovels and trowels. The east halves of refuse pits were then excavated by natural levels and profiled to document the sequence of their filling and to determine each feature's original function. Once the stratigraphy was recorded, the remaining portions of the deposits were screened by natural levels and a 1/2 cubic foot floatation sample was removed from every major layer. Concurrent with the excavation of features, the architectural and fence post holes/post molds were also carefully mapped.

All cultural features were contained within an area 140' north-south by 120' east-west. The site plan consists of a central building concentration ringed by refuse deposits. The buildings encompassed a 35' radius around a point near the center of the grid, thus the plow zone sampling clearly covered the principal buildings as well as all the surrounding yards. Overall plow zone data, which includes artifact densities, the discrete middens marked by ceramics, and the surface oyster shell scatter, combined with the below grade site plan strongly suggest that the entire occupation area was examined. While one fence line running 152' east-west through the site, and probably post-dating the domestic occupation of the property, continued in each direction, all major elements of the homelot were uncovered and a majority of the artifacts from subsurface features were recovered.

The catalog of cultural features includes entire plans for 4 major buildings, the remnants of possibly 4 additional smaller structures, an enclosure, 2 lengths of fences, 2 cooking pits, 14 refuse pits (reaching depths of 3.65' below the top of subsoil), and a human grave. Lacking artifacts, three additional cooking pits are thought to be prehistoric based upon the comparatively small size of the oyster shells they contained compared to those found in adjacent historic deposits.

A 16'x 16' (256 sq.') earthfast house supported by posts set in the ground was delineated by a pattern of six post holes/post molds. Evidence in the north wall indicates that the house was raised in side wall units while three smaller posts along a line five feet from and parallel to the west gable mark the position of the chimney. Burnt daub from the fill of the post mold in the southeast corner of the house indicates that the chimney was built of wattle and daub and yellow Dutch brick found nearby evidently were used for the hearth. Several fragments of turned lead provide evidence that the inhabitant(s) were able to afford glass in their windows rather than simple shutters.

Two of the three principal outbuildings adjacent to the house were similar in dimension and form. Off the east gable of the house an 18'x 20' (360 sq.') structure was oriented on a north-south axis while the second building ran east-west and measured 18'x 25' (450 sq.'). Both were marked by four large corner posts, a small post centered on each gable wall, and two large posts set five to six feet along the side walls on only one end of each structure. These buildings are thought to have served as tobacco barns based upon their size, their lack of chimneys, and their similar construction techniques. The function of the adjacent 10'x 10' (100 sq.') structure is unknown.

Object preservation at 18 CV 279 ranged from very poor to good. As an example, bone survived as soil stains in the human grave (no tooth enamel) however dietary bone from the refuse pits was readily identifiable and should carry details such as butchering marks. For the most part, all artifact classes are stable as few metal objects were recovered. As expected with artifacts of this age, the bottle glass and tin glazed ceramics are flaking however they can be stabilized in the laboratory.

Generally, the ceramic assemblage is very cosmopolitan, including North Italian slipware, Iberian storage jars, and English Surrey wares. A Potomac Creek cord impressed vessel is also represented in the collection, suggesting trade links with the Indians just

below the Falls of the Potomac. Case bottle fragments predominate the glass assemblage and a bottle neck for the earliest style of bottle reaching the Chesapeake c.1650 was discovered. Metal artifacts include a hoe, a trigger guard, a spur, and a fine braided metallic band which was most likely a clothing accessory. Finally, the dietary bone includes domestic cow and pig and wild species such as deer and a variety of fish available near the site.

The objects obtained during Data Recovery continue to suggest an occupation date for 18 CV 279 in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. Smoking pipe styles (c.1645-1665) and maker's marks (Edward Bird 1630-1665; Flower Hunt 1651-1672) support this dating as do the ceramics, such as English Surrey ware, which were popular in nearby St. Mary's City in the mid seventeenth century. These dates indicate that original patentee (1651) Ishmael Wright probably used the property until John Ashcom acquired the land by 1684.

PROGRESS REPORT

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5 JANUARY 1989

Recent progress on the research at the Compton Tenement Site (18CV279) has focused upon the laboratory treatment and analysis of the artifacts. All of the objects have been washed, marked, and sorted by material types. The historic artifacts have been described and this information is presently being entered into computer systems in preparation for the study of the site by the Principal Investigator. Additionally, prehistoric artifact analysis and the identification of the material retrieved from the floatation of soils are underway.

Fifty-seven plowzone soil samples were sent to the University of Maryland for chemical analysis and the results have been received. The data will now be correlated to site maps for the identification of activity areas around the dwellings. A single carbon sample from a suspected prehistoric feature was sent to Beta Analytic in Coral Gables, Florida. The date derived from this analysis should clarify the chronological use of the site prior to the seventeenth century.

In the coming weeks, the Principal Investigator shall review the laboratory data and write the major portion of the text. Graphics and artifact photographs will also be selected and prepared for inclusion in the draft report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INITIAL HISTORICAL RESEARCH
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK
AT
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27 JULY 1988

Introduction

This brief report is a preliminary summary of the archaeological investigations conducted by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger and Associates, Inc. (LBA), of East Orange, New Jersey, on Site 18 CV 279 for CRJ Associates, Inc., Camp Springs, Maryland, between June 27, 1988 and July 23, 1988. It is being submitted one week after the completion of fieldwork to the Southern Maryland Regional Archaeologist and to the State Administrator for Archaeology for internal review and will be followed by a complete report with references following data analysis.

In sum, the project entailed the preparation of background research, plow zone excavation, mechanical removal of plow zone soils, the mapping of subsurface features, and the covering of major deposits exposed by the excavations with polyethelene for protection until additional research is initiated.

Historical Research

The main purpose of the historical research component of the project was to identify the early ownership of the property. Prior work had assigned a bracket of occupation dating from ca.1632 to 1700; the focus of the research was, therefore, on establishing ownership and occupation of the site in the second half of the seventeenth century although deed research in county records was taken up to the twentieth century.

A severe fire on March 3, 1882 destroyed all Calvert County's public records, which at the time dated back to 1658. A second fire on June 27, 1882 burned most of the records that had been salvaged from the first blaze. However, many of these documents, including the vast range of probate and court records, were generated at the colony or state level, and therefore, duplicates or originals are available at the Hall of Records in Annapolis. One day's research was nevertheless devoted to records available in Prince Frederick since late nineteenth- and twentieth-century deed and court records have been known to contain recitals and depositions describing earlier events, particularly when it was known that original records had been destroyed. Unfortunately, this search did not yield information pertaining to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Two individuals were also consulted. Ms. Ailene Hutchins, a local Calvert County historian who has abstracted material relating to early Calvert County from other county records as well as from documents at the Hall of Records, permitted an LBA researcher to review her information. The name of the original patent was identified from her collection; this was then verified in the original land records, which survive, fully indexed, at the Hall of Records. Dr. Lois Green Carr, Historian for St. Marys County, also consulted with LBA researchers, providing important information on record groups housed at the Hall of Records in which relevant data might be found.

The site was originally contained in the 75-acre Compton Patent, which was surveyed in 1651. Ishmael Wright, the patentee, assigned his rights to Antoine LeCompte, who is believed to have returned them to Wright after 1658. By 1684, John Ashcom, who owned the nearby Point Patience tract as well as several properties in St. Marys, Calvert, and Dorchester Counties, acquired the Compton Patent. He died, leaving one-half interest in Compton to his eldest son Charles and the other half to his youngest son Samuel. He left Point Patience to his second son Nathaniel. Samuel and Nathaniel died in 1686 and 1687 respectively, leaving their property to their eldest brother Charles, who appears to have owned all of his father's land by the time he died in 1702.

As previously mentioned, historical research on the Compton property was completed for the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries however it will not be reviewed here since the site appears to have been abandoned by c.1700 based upon the archaeological evidence. It is important to note that the earliest volume of rent rolls, which covers the period 1651-1700, has been misfiled at the Hall of Records. As it may contain the key in resolving some of the outstanding issues, LBA has been assured that the archives' staff is searching for the volume.

Archaeological Fieldwork

A planned systematic surface collection of 18 CV 279 was not executed by agreement with the Regional Archaeologist since there was virtually no surface visibility aside from scattered oyster shells in the area where the site was originally discovered. The powdery consistency of the soil as a result of extreme drought conditions made the procedure impractical even after the entire site was carefully overturned to a depth of 4" with the teeth of a bulldozer.

Plow zone excavation was therefore immediately initiated with the establishment of a grid of 10' squares which enclosed the site in a 150'square area. The grid was tied to a baseline located south of the site along a treeline which was protected from construction activities. Those units which formed intersecting east-west and north-south lines through the estimated center of the site were excavated first. In each of the selected 10' grid squares, a 2.5' unit was excavated to subsoil and all soils removed were sifted through 1/4" mesh. Concurrent with these excavations, the field quantification of artifacts, oyster shells, and bone from each unit dictated where additional units were placed until it was estimated that 10% of the plow zone over the site had been sifted. This resulted in the excavation of 162 2.5' squares which not only assured a 10% sample of the entire site but also allowed a 12.25% sample of those areas the field quantification of ceramics indicated were discrete middens. All plow zone procedures were reviewed and approved by the Regional Archaeologist in the field.

Once the plow zone sampling was completed, the soil over the site was mechanically removed from a 140'x 150' area by two pans assisted by a bulldozer. This heavy equipment was made available from the construction project. The procedure employed the bulldozer to push each pan to remove the top 4" of soil. Once the lower surface was established, a single pan carefully removed the remaining soil until subsoil was reached. While most of the

plow zone was successfully removed by the machines, the site had to be flat shovelled and trowelled for the identification of cultural features. The original grid was also re-established at the subsoil level from the permanent baseline for mapping purposes.

The site was mapped at a scale of 1"=10' (see enclosure) and a detail of the house was prepared at 1/4"=1'. Identified features include at least 17 discrete refuse areas, 7 structures, and numerous post holes forming fence lines and as yet unidentified features of the cultural landscape. Importantly, a confirmed historic human grave, and the possibility of the presence of two additional human graves, should be noted. So as to insure that proper procedures are followed, the State Attorney for Calvert County was notified of the discovery of the interments through the Regional Archaeologist.

Since prehistoric lithics and ceramics were recovered in the plow zone, those soil stains which did not have artifacts on their surfaces could be prehistoric. The features appear to be predominantly historic however and they seem to date to the third quarter of the seventeenth century. Although the artifacts recovered from previous excavations by others were not available for study, a Binford pipestem was reported as 1653.60 (n=11). Additionally, LBA fieldwork recovered a dateable pipe bowl which carried a maker's mark on the heel. The mark appears as "FLOWER . HUNT" who was an English pipemaker from 1651 to 1672. Other pipe bowls recovered by LBA generally date 1645-1665 and 1650-1680.

While important information has been gained from the plow zone excavations and site mapping, features must be excavated to recover adequate data to address the three research questions outlined in the LBA proposal (building organization, use of space, subsistence practices). Specifically, the earthfast structures appear to have been repaired, modified, and/or enlarged and it is not possible to clearly discuss the evolution of the homelot without additional data. Concerning the use of space at 18 CV 279, there are features that seem to have distinct functions. For example, three small circular pits with burnt edges and filled with oyster shells could have served as cooking pits or they may have been used to prepare lime. They could also

be prehistoric hearths. Finally, the many refuse deposits at the site offer strong potential for the recovery of floral and faunal remains which are not available in the plow zone but are needed to address the questions pertaining to subsistence practices.

Before LBAs departure from the site, all major cultural features were carefully covered with heavy polyethelene plastic sheets held down with stones. If the site must be backfilled before further excavations occur, this must be accomplished by hand since heavy machinery would compromise the exposed features.

Pin flags marking the location of features were removed however all reference points, including the grid nails, were left in place. The outside perimeter of the site was also marked with pin flags since heavy construction equipment is currently being operated along the east edge of the site.

Interpretive Summary

LBA historical research has revealed that the land which encompasses 18 CV 279 was first patented in 1651 and that it was referred to as Compton. The few dateable artifacts recovered during preliminary archaeological fieldwork support a beginning date of occupation as early as the mid-seventeenth century and an abandonment of the site at the beginning of the fourth quarter of the same century, probably at a time when the patent changed hands. On the basis of the preliminary historical research and archaeological fieldwork, and prior to full laboratory analysis, the site was named Compton Tenement and was dated c.1651 to c. 1684, establishing it as the earliest historic site recorded in Calvert County, Maryland. Because 18 CV 279 is highly significant and has demonstrated potential to answer important research questions, the final stages of archaeological investigations should be initiated immediately before erosion destroys this now exposed site.

Notes on Compton 18CV279

General Information

Compton (18CV279) is a 17th century domestic site in Calvert County, excavated by Louis Berger between July and August 1988. The collection of artifacts consists from one hundred and sixty-two 2.5 x 2.5 foot plowzone units and twenty-three subsurface features, mainly refuse pits, after the remaining plowzone was mechanically stripped. Excavated features were bisected with the east or south half being removed and screened through ¼" mesh. Excavators took flotation samples from the western half then screened the soil through ¼" mesh. The Compton collection and its associated paperwork was given to the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory in 19???. (ASK KATE)

Rehousing Issues

The collection was rehoused in new bags within chloroplast boxes before the cataloging process. However, certain procedures were not undertaken so the collection was sent back during cataloging to be redone. For instance, plowzone materials were still housed in one bag, mixing bone, nails, stone, etc., and only some metal had been housed separately in containers. Some acid-free tags contained non-archival red ink, and smaller bags from one lot were not combined into a single larger bag. These problems were noted by Collections and were fixed when the artifacts were returned to the cataloguers.

Cataloging Issues

The artifact catalog from Compton only consisted of feature material, no plowzone inventory was found. As the Berger catalog was partially in unidentified code sheets, the entire collection was recatalogued for the NEH project. Berger's identification was maintained as much as possible within the new catalog for consistency reasons. The faunal material was copied directly from Berger's catalog into the new catalog as none of the cataloguers can identify bone that specifically. Ceramic identification as Dutch, UID, Saintonge, and North Devon was generally correct and maintained in the new catalog along with vessel identifications. Berger's identification as Majolica or Delftware was put in the catalog, but we have identified all tin glaze ceramics as just tin glaze due to the inconsistent definition of majolica and delftware. Metal object identification for the most part was also imported into the new catalog. Our project also inventoried the artifacts found in range cabinet 76 and the artifact locations were noted in Re:Discovery for future access. Some vessel information on tags was found with ceramic vessels in the cabinets. This information was further recorded on vessel sheets and will be entered into the object records in Re:Discovery.

Future Artifact Analysis

Compton contains a larger number of Dutch artifacts, both pipes and ceramics. The date is also probably shorter than the 33 years that Berger states in its report. This site can rely much information about the life in early Maryland and deserves further research from scholars.

Future Collections Work

-collection needs to be organized within the boxes and the box labels reflecting exactly what proveniences are inside